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S E C R E T PARIS 000479

SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/CT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2014

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH ARREST ELEVEN IN 'JIHADISTS TO IRAQ'

INVESTIGATION

REF: PARIS 8760 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT, FOR REAS
ONS 1.4 B/D

¶1. (SBU) Summary: French media reported on January 26 the arrest two days prior of seven people suspected of involvement in recruiting and sending French residents to fight Coalition forces in Iraq. The Embassy also learned that an additional four suspects were arrested in the morning of January 26. These are the first arrests since the investigation of French jihadists going to Iraq was begun in September 2004. End summary.

¶2. (S) After French officials spent most of 2004 publicly denying that French citizens might be going to Iraq, the Paris Prosecutor's office ordered the opening of an investigation in September 2004. Investigating judges Jean-Louis Bruguiere and Jean-Francois Ricard were given investigative authority. As reported reftel, the judges were initially cautioned to be circumspect in their investigations because of GOF fear that the investigation might harm two French journalists held hostage in Iraq. The hostages were released December 21, 2004. When last queried about the investigation in early January, Ricard told Poloff that the investigation was progressing, although authorities had no indication of a distinct "network" sending Islamic radicals to Iraq. Rather, they believed that the jihadists to Iraq benefited from more informal support through local mosques and families.

¶3. (S) In a lunch hosted by the Ambassador on January 24 (reported septel), Bruguiere revealed that several suspects had been arrested that morning in connection with the investigation. He added that in examining the case, he had come across reports of the involvement of minors as young as 13-years-old. Two days later, the French press reported these arrests and added additional detail. According to the press reports, the DST (France's internal security service) arrested seven people on January 24, three who were planning to go fight in Iraq and four suspected of recruitment and fundraising. Two of the seven are reported to be women. The press reported that those arrested were affiliated with the Adda'wa mosque in Paris' 19th arrondissement. Four French citizens reported killed in Iraq had ties with mosques in the 19th arrondissement, and three of them had frequented the Adda'wa mosque. An unnamed "high-level" Interior Ministry official quoted in the reporting said police and security services benefited from increased surveillance powers included in the recently enacted Perben II law. (Comment: This unnamed official, probably a member of Interior Minister Villepin's Cabinet, also lauded the counter-terrorism policies enacted by Villepin as being instrumental in the arrests. That is a stretch, given that Villepin did not figure in the passing of Perben II or the assigning of the case to the counter-terrorism investigating judges. End comment.)

¶4. (S) Ricard (strictly protect) told Poloff January 26 that, in addition to the seven arrested on January 24, an additional four were arrested on January 26. He said that none of those arrested was under 18, although some would probably be implicated in recruiting minors for jihad in Iraq. Of the eleven arrested, he said 3-4 were of "special interest" to French authorities. Depending on the results of the DST's interrogations, the others would either be released or charged with relatively minor crimes. Ricard said the investigation was ongoing and could involve additional arrests.

¶5. (U) Minimize considered.
Leach